

The Top Ten Warning Signs of an Anxiety Disorder



Since everyone feels nervous at some point, how can you tell if you are suffering from an anxiety disorder that requires medical treatment? After all, even the most confident people sometimes find themselves panicking in certain circumstances. As it turns out, most people with anxiety disorders have a cluster of typical symptoms. Here are the top ten warning signs that your feelings of anxiety warrant a trip to a doctor or therapist.

1) Social discomfort

Even if you are deeply anxious, you might be able to bring yourself to socialize. The more relevant question concerns how socializing makes you *feel*. Does the thought of organizing a party or attending a group dinner sound frightening, and do you worry that every guest will be making negative assessments of your appearance and personality? You might find yourself sweating at social events, hear your voice wobbling and feel your heart pounding in your throat. Further, you might become even more nervous when you worry about these physical signs of anxiety being noticed. These social symptoms of anxiety can sometimes be eased with medication or the help of a good therapist.

2) Obsession with physical sensations

A large number of anxiety disorder sufferers also struggle with hypochondria, which is a powerful and distressing preoccupation with the idea of being physically ill. For example, your day might be ruined every time you feel a strange new pain, or you may believe that every headache is a sign of a brain tumor.

3) Depersonalization

Depersonalization is characterized by a sense that you are not part of the world around you. Some people feel like they are in a waking dream, but you may also feel like other people are moving at a different speed. Depersonalization is often accompanied by mild dizziness or a sense that your balance is slightly off.

4) Feelings of impending doom

Sufferers of anxiety disorders often experience a sense of impending doom. For example, you might find yourself suddenly and irrationally predicting your own death or have a strong intuition that something terrible is about to happen. These feelings may be linked to other known phobias (such as fears of flying or enclosed spaces) but they may also be experienced without any obvious trigger.

5) Irritability

There are a few reasons why anxiety can be linked with increased irritability. Firstly, it's exhausting to live with persistent anxiety and this tiredness can make you more likely to get angry at people who don't meet your expectations. Secondly, your friends and family might have noticed your anxiety and you may feel extremely defensive when they ask questions about how you're feeling.

6) Sleep problems

If you have clinically significant levels of anxiety, you might also suffer from insomnia. Some people also find that anxiety leads to intense recurring nightmares or to poor sleep quality that leads to regular lethargy.

7) Heart palpitations

If you are frightened by what feels like a fast or irregular heartbeat, it's important to rule out physical causes before you consider potential psychological causes. However, if heart problems have been ruled out then an anxiety disorder is a likely explanation. In many cases, an increased awareness of your heartbeat makes it feel abnormal even though the rhythm is regular.

8) Digestive disturbances

Similarly, if you have ruled out bowel disorders and other causes of stomach cramps, anxiety may be the explanation for your digestive discomfort. It's also worth noting that anxiety can lead to episodes of diarrhea.

9) Difficulty relaxing

Do you feel restless most of the day and struggle to relax? If even a good book or a comfortable bed can't help you calm down and feel mellow, you might be suffering from an anxiety disorder.

10) Excessive sweating

Finally, those with anxiety disorders often complain about excessive sweating (often on the forehead or under the arms). These episodes can take place even when the room is at a comfortable temperature.

Although it can be difficult to approach a doctor or a therapist about the possibility of anxiety treatment, taking that first step can make a huge difference to your life. If you can get your anxiety under control through medication or therapy, your increased levels of confidence can influence everything from your job prospects to your closest relationships.

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